

**Idaho State Department of Agriculture  
Specialty Crop Block Grant Program  
FY 2006 Final Report**

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## **Program Overview**

Idaho consumers are increasingly demanding local foods for their freshness, flavor and because they support the local economy. They are conscious of the environmental impact of their food choices and are more often choosing local foods with a smaller carbon footprint. Idaho consumers recognize the quality of local foods and seek out seasonal fresh foods and locally produced non-perishables at retail grocers and farmers markets as well as at the restaurants they frequent. The Idaho Preferred® program is taking advantage of this growing consumer trend by identifying and promoting Idaho food and agriculture products - including specialty crops such as fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs, wine and nursery items. The Idaho State Department of Agriculture is helping consumers find local products while at the same time assisting Idaho's specialty crop producers to develop local, sustainable markets for their products.

This Specialty Crop Block Grant included funding for five promotional projects associated with the Idaho Preferred® brand identity campaign. Idaho Preferred® is a program managed by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture to identify and promote Idaho food and agriculture products. Since the program's launch in 2003, significant progress has been made in the recognition of Idaho Preferred® logo and its assurance that products that carry the label are "The Pick of the Crop from Idaho."

The 2007 Specialty Crop Block Grant projects included the following components:

1. Spring Retail Nursery Promotion
2. Fall Retail Open-Air Market Promotion
3. Television Advertising Campaign
4. Foodservice Promotion
5. School Program Expansion

## **Project Summaries:**

### **1. Spring Retail Nursery Promotion**

#### ***Project Summary and Approach***

The nursery industry continues to be one of Idaho's top ten "crops" in terms of cash receipts and has great potential for continued growth. Most gardeners and landscapers would agree that plants propagated and started in Idaho are more likely to thrive when transplanted in Idaho.

To assist the Idaho nursery industry in identifying their plants as grown in Idaho, signage, banners, stickers, plant stakes and other point of sale (POS) materials were produced incorporating the Idaho Preferred® logo. Several prototypes of materials were introduced at the January 2008 Idaho Nursery and Landscape Association meeting. With input from INLA members, tree tags, plant stakes, retail headers and large banners were produced. A new slogan, "Grown with Pride in Idaho," was created specifically for Idaho nursery industry to use in this promotion. Because many nursery growers produce fall/winter as well as spring plants, two different versions of headers and banners were produced – one promoting spring trees, plants and flowers and one featuring holiday trees and poinsettias. POS materials were offered to all Idaho

Preferred<sup>®</sup> nursery growers and retailers via mail and email as well as through the Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> website.

To increase awareness of Idaho nursery products and their availability, ISDA Marketing staff worked with traditional garden retailers, as well as grocers who sell plants, to source local nursery products and to encourage use of POS during seasonal promotions. Plants with Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> POS were marketed in major retail chain stores as well as local grocers and home and garden stores.

Finally, to further increase consumer awareness of locally produced plant materials, television was added to the media mix. With savings from other projects within this grant, a TV ad was produced at the Idaho Nursery and Landscape Association's January 2009 Convention and aired statewide for three weeks in March 2009. The ad can be viewed at the Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> website, [www.idahopreferred.com](http://www.idahopreferred.com).

### ***Goals and Outcomes Achieved***

Retail nursery promotions have occurred Wal-Mart, Albertsons, D&B Supply, Town and Country Gardens, Franz Witte Nursery and the Idaho Botanical Gardens. The promotion began with one Idaho grower selling 5000 poinsettias to Boise area Wal-Mart stores. Currently, twelve Idaho nursery producers are using POS materials on plants that they sell to retail outlets. Over 50,000 pieces of POS have been used – including plant stakes in pony packs, gallon containers, and hanging baskets; tree tags used at Christmas and in the spring; and banners and headers used both seasons at participating retailers. The nursery promotion was expanded to include television advertising in March 2009 and retailers and growers are continuing to use POS materials through the summer. Therefore, evaluation was delayed to allow responses to include the spring/summer 2009 growing season. The industry survey will be conducted in October 2009 and market research in 2010 will measure awareness of the Idaho nursery industry and products amongst consumers.

Sales information will be requested as part of the above survey. However, preliminary data obtained via phone calls found that nursery promotions were successful. One grower reported that poinsettia sales with one retail chain increased from zero units in 2006 to 2,142 units in 2007 as a result of the Idaho Preferred nursery promotion. Additionally, spring sales for this grower increased from 5653 units in spring 2007 to 21,221 units in spring 2008 and the addition of 8 new stores to his customer base.

Goals that were established for this project were for the duration of the project – approximately two years. Goals and Expected Measurable Outcomes were stated in the original proposal and were addressed in the final report on page 3, “Goals and Outcomes Achieved.” Longer term goals specific to this project have not been established.

### ***Beneficiaries and Lessons Learned***

The nursery and greenhouse industry was Idaho's seventh largest crop generating over \$76 million in sales in 2008. The entire industry can benefit from consumers' increased awareness of the quality, diversity and availability of Idaho nursery products as seen in statewide television ads. Direct benefit from POS materials is available to participants who choose to use plant

identification materials. Idaho Preferred® participation grew from 16 nurseries in 2008 to 35 nurseries in 2009.

In reviewing the nursery promotion program, we found that cooperation with the Idaho Nursery and Landscape Association was critical to our success. Their input, endorsement and promotion of our POS materials assured widespread awareness and use of the tags, stakes, banners, etc. In addition, working with the Association during their annual convention allowed us to produce a beautiful television ad very efficiently using all local plants on display at their vendor show. Shooting on-site created great excitement and pride by local nursery growers whose products were featured in the commercial.

Television advertising is an effective method for building brand awareness. Previous to this campaign, nursery items were not included in television ads as they were very focused on food. In the 2009-10 Soundstats survey, a question will be added specifically designed to determine if consumers have become more aware of the availability of Idaho nursery products and if so, if they gained that knowledge through television or other sources.

## **2. Fall Retail Open-Air Market Promotion**

### ***Project Summary and Approach***

In 2006 Idaho Preferred® partnered with one Wal-Mart store to test an open-air market concept featuring all Idaho produce. For ten days during the peak of harvest season, the store had a 60 foot display outdoors that featured peaches, plums, pears, grapes, corn, onions, tomatoes, pumpkins, peppers, potatoes and more. Sales of fresh produce at that store increased by nearly 17% during the promotion. As a result of that successful test, the concept was expanded to additional stores locations and to other retail partners with funding from this grant.

In fall 2007 outdoor produce markets were held at 7 Wal-Mart stores throughout the Treasure Valley. The promotion kicked off on August 22<sup>nd</sup> with a press conference hosted by Celia Gould, Director of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture. The 10 day promotion featured local apples, peaches, pears, plums, tomatoes, onions, potatoes, sweet corn, grapes, peppers, pumpkins and melons. Idaho Preferred® signs, banners, stickers, bags, balloons and price cards were used to promote the local produce. The promotion earned TV coverage on two local news programs and was covered by the local daily paper.

In September 2007 the outdoor market concept was expanded to Albertsons stores in the Treasure Valley. Governor Otter proclaimed September as Idaho Preferred® month at an Albertsons store in Meridian and 6 additional stores in the area built displays of Idaho produce throughout the month. In addition to Idaho Preferred® stickers, signage, price cards, and banners, Albertsons introduced their “Idaho Families” series signage. With the help of Idaho Preferred®, Albertsons identified 4 different local farm families who supply produce to their stores. Large 22”x28” signs featuring pictures of the families and their products (melons, cherries, peaches and apples) were produced and placed near their products in Albertsons stores.

Five Paul’s Markets in southwestern Idaho also built Idaho Preferred® produce displays during the month of September. Using POS materials designed specifically for their stores by Idaho

Preferred<sup>®</sup>, this small family-owned chain promoted local produce through in-door and outdoor displays as well as in print ads throughout the summer and fall.

In August 2008, ISDA worked with Wal-Mart to again expand their fall promotion of Idaho produce to 7 additional stores in southeastern Idaho. POS materials were developed and distributed. A press conference was held in Boise with TV coverage resulting on two local stations. In addition to Wal-Mart, several other retail grocers promoted locally grown produce through store displays and print ads. Albertsons built displays in 10 stores throughout the state and used the Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> logo to identify local produce in their print ads. Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> also partnered with Paul's Markets and a local apple grower to produce and air a television commercial promoting the quality and freshness of local apples and other produce. POS materials were made available to smaller grocers throughout the state including Broulim's stores in eastern Idaho and Swenson's Markets in Twin Falls - as well as to 20 Farmers Markets across the state.

### ***Goals and Outcomes Achieved***

The goal of this component of the Specialty Crop Grant was to raise consumer awareness, availability and sales of Idaho produce through retail promotions. Consumer research conducted in the fall of 2008 found that 41 percent of consumers statewide have seen or heard the Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> advertising message – up 10% from 2007. Of those who recalled seeing the message, nearly 20% report having seen the logo at the grocery store. Additionally, the study found that nearly 20% of consumers reported buying more local products than they have in the past. Finally, retailers who participated in the fall produce promotion reported sales increases ranging from about 5% to over 15% during the promotion period. The reports of sales increases were provided verbally by retail partners and although several attempts were made to get actual sales data, retailers were not willing to provide confidential sales information. The benchmark used to report the increase in sales compared the time period of the promotion compared to sales of fresh produce during the same period the year prior.

Goals that were established for this project were for the duration of the project – approximately two years. Longer term goals specific to this project have not been established.

### ***Beneficiaries and Lessons Learned***

Forty three Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> members who produce fruits, vegetables, plants, herbs and wine benefited directly from the fall retail promotions as their products were included in outdoor, in-store or print promotions. These producers reported not only increased sales but also improved relationships and communications with retailers who were implementing fall promotions.

We found that successful retail promotions are dependent on establishing long term relationships with district and corporate level company representatives. Their buy-in and support of the promotion is crucial to store-level implementation. We also learned that it is more effective, although not necessarily more efficient, to create unique POS materials specific to each chain or group of retailers. A retail promotion often takes more human resources in terms of time and coordination than it does financial resources as some stores are now beginning to create their own POS materials that include the Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> logo. Finally, we found it very difficult to get actual sales information from participants – both producers and retailers - to allow for evaluation through quantifiable data.

### **3. Television Advertising**

#### ***Project Summary and Approach***

Television advertising is a critical medium for increasing consumer awareness and recall of a brand, logo or message. To promote Idaho specialty crops and raise consumer awareness of the Idaho Preferred® brand, three 30 second television commercials were produced in November 2007. Each ad features beautiful food shots representative of the wide variety of specialty crops grown in Idaho such as potatoes, tomatoes, fruits, vegetables and wine. Each version uses a different style of music bed and voice. Because the ads also include some non-specialty crop foods, expenses for production and airing of the ads were split proportionate to content. The new television ads ran statewide for 4 weeks in May and June 2008 and three weeks in September 2008. The ads are also viewable via the Idaho Preferred® website, [www.idahopreferred.com](http://www.idahopreferred.com).

#### ***Goals and Outcomes Achieved***

One goal of the television ad campaign was to reach 80% of the target audience of women 25-54 an average of 3 times. Delivery fell somewhat short with 72% reach but frequency exceeded goal at 3.6. The second goal of the TV ad campaign was to achieve consumer awareness of Idaho Preferred® products by 40% of target audience in southern Idaho markets. Consumer market research in December 2008 found that this goal had been surpassed. Consumer awareness statewide reached 41% and in the Treasure Valley of southern Idaho the ads actually achieved 48% consumer awareness.

To conduct this consumer awareness study, Idaho State Department of Agriculture contracted with Drake Cooper for advertising, public relations and consumer research services. On our behalf, they joined with Opinion Research's regularly-scheduled SoundStats Random Digit Dial (RDD) omnibus survey. The survey was fielded between 12/4/08 - 12/14/08. The statewide telephone survey included 1,211 respondents evenly split male/female, head of household 18+. Results were compared with the last Idaho Preferred survey conducted in January 2007.

Goals that were established for this project were for the duration of the project – approximately two years. Longer term goals specific to this project have not been established.

#### ***Beneficiaries and Lessons Learned***

Idaho Preferred® currently includes 209 participants total. Ninety six, or nearly 46%, of participants are specialty crop producers, processors and supporting organizations. All of these producers benefit from television advertising that leads to increased consumer awareness of Idaho specialty crop foods and wine.

It is critical with a branding program such as Idaho Preferred® to include and represent all products and segments within the advertising medium. Producing three different ads allowed us to effectively include most specialty crop products. Having multiple ads with different types of music style also allows our agency to place ads that best fit selected television programming and leads to more effective messaging.

#### **4. Foodservice Promotion**

##### ***Project Summary and Approach***

The foodservice industry is critical to the success of many specialty crop producers. To increase awareness of Idaho foods and wines among chefs and restaurant owners and managers, an Idaho Preferred® foodservice promotion was launched in the fall of 2007.

The Treasure Valley Dine-Around was held in September 2007 to promote restaurants that menu local foods and wines. Seven restaurants from Boise, Meridian and Nampa participated by identifying and promoting Idaho Preferred® items on their menu. The promotion included radio advertising and in-store signage and/or menu inserts. The 2007 Dine Around menu promotion did not include a ticket selling component but rather focused on restaurant promotion via print and radio advertising. In 2008, 15 tickets were sold.

In addition a waitstaff incentive contest was offered to encourage servers to suggest menu selections including local products. Sales for menu items using local product were tracked by participating restaurants and submitted to Idaho Preferred. Top selling servers each received a gift certificate to a local movie theater. In addition, diners who ordered local products from the menu were presented with an entry form to receive a gift certificate to the restaurant. Two winners from participating restaurants were chosen at random and received restaurant gift certificates. Specialty Crop funds were used to purchase the gift certificates, totaling \$130.00. However, in reviewing funding guidelines we found that this was an unacceptable use of specialty crop grant funds. Therefore, this expense was reversed and paid with state funding.

A foodservice promotion was also held in north Idaho to promote restaurants in the Coeur d'Alene and Sandpoint markets that featured local products on their menus. The two-week promotion included print advertising and on-menu designation of local products. Five area restaurants participated.

##### ***Goals and Outcomes Achieved***

The purpose of this project was to increase awareness and use of Idaho Preferred® products in local restaurants; increase consumer awareness of the quality and diversity of Idaho products; and assist Idaho Preferred® specialty crop participants in marketing their products through foodservice. The goal of having five downtown Boise restaurants take part as well as the goal that each participating restaurant add additional Idaho food/wine items to their menus were met. The radio campaign was successful in reaching consumers with approximately 230,000 gross impressions over a 2 week period.

##### ***Beneficiaries and Lessons Learned***

This promotion directly impacted the 20-25 producers whose products were included on the promotional menus. These companies not only gained immediate short-term sales but also gained new longer-term customers - both foodservice operators and consumers. Specialty crops promoted in the program included peaches, herbs, potatoes, wine, lettuce, cherries, raspberries, tomatoes, apricots, nectarines, green beans, sweet corn, cucumbers, strawberries, summer squash and wine.

From this project we learned just how difficult it is to achieve follow-through from restaurants on sales promotions. Due to high staff turn-over, minimal training and extreme time constraints,

restaurants who participated did not fully implement all components of the promotion and were unable or unwilling to track sales. However, we also developed strong working relationships with several local restaurants that remain committed to serving local foods. We also learned that incentive-based promotions are not permissible under Specialty Crop guidelines.

The Dine Around promotion began in 2007 and has since seen several changes. The 2007 program lacked full restaurant participation, but much feedback was acquired to restructure the program in 2008. The 2008 Dine Around incorporated many of the learnings from the 2007 event but still had limited success. However, great restaurant contacts resulted from the Dine Around programs and led to new foodservice events in 2008 and 2009, including the successful Farmer-Chef Collaborative networking events that have resulted in increased sales for Idaho specialty crop producers. ISDA staff members are continually working with industry and restaurant contacts to identify a mutually beneficial and profitable program for restaurants and specialty crop producers, and other foodservice promotional events will take the place of the Dine Around in 2009.

## **5. School Program Expansion:**

### ***Project Summary and Approach***

One of the many highlights of the Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> program is the education component. Involvement with schools includes teacher training workshops, resource materials and helping schools include Idaho foods in the cafeteria menus. In addition, Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> offers schools a healthy fundraiser featuring many specialty crop products. In order to expand the Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> educational program, additional staff was needed.

In August 2007, the Idaho State Department of Agriculture hired Kimberly Polzin to help plan, implement and evaluate Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> educational programs. Kim's duties include distributing educational materials to teachers reached through summer Ag in the Classroom Teacher Workshops. In addition she assists in the development of the monthly "Incredible Edible Idaho" posters which feature information on specialty crops grown in Idaho, where they are produced, production and nutrition facts, and classroom activities. Kim also manages the Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> school fundraiser which includes apples, potatoes, pears, honey and salsa as well as several Idaho food products. In December 2007, Kim's employment was extended upon receipt of the 2007 Specialty Crop Block Grant. She will continue to work to expand the Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup> education and foodservice programs.

### ***Goals and Outcomes Achieved***

The goal of this project was to continue to expand the educational component of Idaho Preferred<sup>®</sup>, increase teacher and student knowledge of Idaho foods, and expand the offering of Idaho specialty foods on school lunch and breakfast menus. *Funding from this grant was for personnel only -all other components of this education program were funded through other sources.*

In 2007, ISDA partnered with the Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) Child Nutrition Program to promote local produce through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (FF&V) program. During September, 25 FF&V schools were encouraged to buy and serve local produce with their FF&V funds. All school foodservice directors at the 25 participating schools were sent "My Idaho Pyramid" tearpads and magnets and Idaho Preferred signs and stickers to use in the



cafeteria. Idaho Preferred® educational materials were sent to 175-200 teachers during 2007-08 school year. In addition, the “Incredible Edible Idaho” posters were distributed to approximately 300 teachers and 600 school cafeterias each month. For teachers, a 12 page Healthy Harvest booklet with activity ideas was produced. Approximately 100 booklets were distributed to teachers who requested them through Idaho Ag in the Classroom workshops. Twenty six schools took part in the Idaho Preferred school fundraiser in 2007. The Fundraiser included apples, potatoes, honey and pickled vegetables. In 2008, the school fundraiser has expanded from 26 schools to 33 and sales have increased by nearly 20%. These materials may be viewed at [www.idahopreferred.com](http://www.idahopreferred.com) - *however none of the projects/materials described above were actually paid for with these Specialty Crop Grant funds – only Staff time to accomplish these projects was paid for by this grant.*

Goals that were established for this project were for the duration of the project – approximately two years. Longer term goals specific to this project have not been established.

### ***Beneficiaries and Lessons Learned***

All 97 specialty crop producers who participate in the Idaho Preferred® program have benefited from having additional staff resources to carry out educational programs. We learned that in order to have a successful, effective specialty crop promotion program it is critical to have adequate human resources as well as financial resources.

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### **Additional Information**

For additional information, please visit the Idaho Preferred® website at [www.idahopreferred.com](http://www.idahopreferred.com).